FIRST TASKS AS PRIME MINISTER

2. PERSONNEL

WHEN I came to consider what the Liberal quota of the Ministry was to be, I was confronted with the resolution carried by all the Liberal *Liberal leaders* Ministers at a meeting to which I was *hold aloof* not summoned, binding each and all not to serve under me. This decision was responsible for the disastrous split in the Liberal Party which diminished its influence, paralysed its energies, and distracted its purpose for all the years that have ensued since 1916. Even to, this day it poisons relations between men whose cordial co-operation is essential to the well-being of Liberalism. It deflects judgment upon every issue. Yet however disastrous it was to the future strength of the Party, from the point of view of the efficiency of the Government as a war instrument, the decision arrived at by the official leaders of the Party to decline association with the new Government was an undoubted advantage. There were only three Liberal ex-Ministers whose assistance would have been of undoubted value. One was the Liberal leader, Mr. Asquith. He lacked the force and initiative essential to leadership of the nation in a great war, but as a member of a War Cabinet his counsel and experience

would have been of great value. But as I have